

WILDLIFE SERVICES—COLORADO

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Colorado

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on Colorado Wildlife Services (WS) for help in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. WS' professional wildlife biologists respond to these requests with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS employees help Colorado's livestock industry reduce losses from predators. The program assists property owners with migratory bird problems and helps them obtain the proper permits from the appropriate agency as necessary. WS also assists with the beaver and prairie dog damage issues that occur across the State. In addition, the Colorado program assists the State Health Department and Colorado Division of Wildlife with monitoring efforts to detect plague and other wildlife diseases. Also, WS provides assistance to several airports across the State to protect air



passengers and aircraft from dangerous wildlife collisions with aircraft.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

The Colorado WS Program, with assistance from other Western Region states, staffs an exhibit at the National Western Stock Show each year. This exhibit gives the WS program the opportunity for exposure to livestock producers across the nation, as well as the opportunity to educate the general public regarding wildlife conflict issues.

Protecting Livestock—Livestock production is an important industry in Colorado. In

January of 2006, the total value of Colorado's cattle and calves was \$2.92 billion, and the value of the State's sheep inventory was \$46.36 million. In addition to many factors that cause economic hardships for livestock producers, including the recent drought, predator attacks by coyotes, black bears, and mountain lions can result in significant losses for some producers. In FY 2005, the Colorado branch of the National Agricultural Statistics Service reported that Colorado livestock producers lost an estimated 15,300 sheep and lambs to predators during 2004, accounting for 46% of all losses. This was in spite of the fact that many, approximately 80%, of these same producers reported using nonlethal predator deterrent tools (NASS, 1997). The value of this loss was placed at \$1.49 million. Research suggests that these losses could be two to three times higher in the absence of an effective livestock protection program. Colorado WS works cooperatively with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado Department of Agriculture, counties, and local livestock associations to provide assistance to livestock producers with predation from coyotes, black bears, mountain lions and other predators as needed.

Protecting Aircraft and Passengers—Every year, lives are endangered worldwide and bil-

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting livestock from predation from coyotes, black bears, and mountain lions
- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Managing damage caused by migratory birds
- Monitoring for plague, avian influenza and other wildlife diseases
- Protecting property from beaver damage

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Colorado

- Improving predator damage management methods
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing prairie dog damage to agriculture
- Evaluating methods to control damage by resident Canada Geese
- Managing wildlife diseases (e.g. Chronic Wasting Disease, West Nile Virus, Plague, Avian Influenza)

lions of dollars are wasted when birds and other wildlife damage aircraft. Experts estimated that bird strikes with aircraft cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$550 million annually.

The WS Program is recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS' research arm, the national Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts studies to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports, develop management tools to reduce these hazards, and provide personnel with information to control or prevent these potential risks. WS also maintains the National Bird Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species that pose the greatest threat to aviation.

Applying this scientific expertise, the Colorado WS program provided assistance at 11 airports in FY04. In addition to providing training and advice, WS also worked on-site to resolve wildlife conflicts. For these airports, the most significant risk to human lives is the presence of wildlife lingering on or around the airfields. Therefore, most WS efforts focus on reducing the presence of wildlife in these areas.

Protecting Threatened and Endangered Wildlife—During the past few years Colorado WS has assisted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with the reintroduction of the black-footed ferret. The Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with WS, the Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Division of Wildlife, and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources has cooperated in the process of reestablishing a self-sustaining population in northwest Colorado and northeast Utah. On November 15, 2001, black-footed ferrets were released for the first time into the Wolf Creek area of northwest Colorado. The Colorado WS program continues to cooperate with this group by collecting blood samples from coyotes to determine the presence of plague, which is a threat to the success of the reintroduction. The survival of black-footed

ferrets in the release area was documented in this area during FY04 and additional survival continues to be documented.

During FY03 the WS program was requested by the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) to assist in the capture of a Canada lynx, which had been located in an area not considered lynx habitat. Observed to be in poor physical condition, it was feared the lynx would die of starvation. WS captured the lynx; it was immobilized, given to CDOW, and returned to their rehabilitation facility. The lynx subsequently returned to the wild after regaining the weight and a healthier condition. This particular lynx would have been lost to the reintroduction program if it had not been recaptured.

Avian Influenza Surveillance—Colorado WS has cooperated with CDOW to collect samples from shorebirds and waterfowl as part of a national surveillance for the presence of highly pathogenic avian influenza. In FY06 WS provided funding to the Colorado Division of Wildlife to collect fecal, or environmental, samples from across the State as a part of this program for the early detection of this disease which could have serious implications for the domestic poultry industry and public health.

Protecting Property from Beaver Damage—Protecting transportation, agriculture, and natural resources through beaver damage management is a major consideration for WS in Colorado. Historically, beaver were considered a valuable natural resource and an extremely important part of the economy. In recent years, however, little demand for beaver products has resulted in decreased trapping and subsequent increases in beaver numbers. Beaver now occupy nearly all watersheds in the State. Typical requests for assistance involved damage to roadways and bridges, agriculture and forest resources, and flooding of municipal sewer and water treatment facilities.

In FY03 the Colorado WS Program entered into a Cooperative agreement with the Colorado Department of Transportation to provide assistance in controlling beaver damage statewide.

WS routinely uses explosives to remove beaver dams that are flooding property. Before using explosives, Colorado WS personnel are trained and certified in the safe and effective use of explosives.

Looking to the Future

In Colorado, public safety is a concern for wildlife managers. This is particularly true at airports. Although great progress has been accomplished, additional attention must be given to this very specialized area of work.

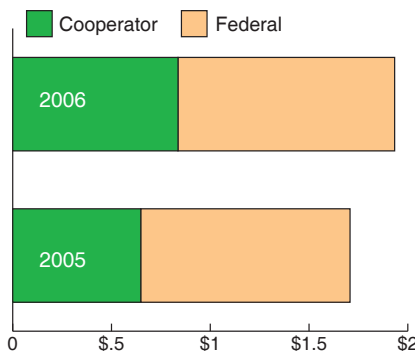
As Colorado's population continues to grow, especially in more rural areas, the potential for human-wildlife conflicts is increasing. WS' ability to respond to this growing need for service will depend on the availability of critical resources, especially the necessary funding.

Colorado Wildlife Research Funding

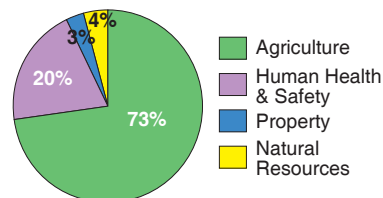
In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators who have a vested interest in the program: producers, private individuals, businesses, and other Federal, State, and local government agencies. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

The Colorado WS Program has received funding from the Colorado Division of Wildlife to provide assistance in capturing mountain lions for a lion research project in western Colorado.

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA is an equal employment provider and employer.

Major Cooperators

- Colorado Department of Agriculture
- Colorado Division of Wildlife
- Colorado Department of Transportation
- Southern Ute Tribe
- Denver International Airport
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Counties
- Livestock Associations